

Neighborhood Planning Advisory Committee

VALIDATION SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

October 20, 2009

SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING(S), TOPICS AND ATTENDEES

The Validation Subcommittee met on July 8, 2009 to discuss what criteria and process would be adequate to validate updated neighborhood plans. In attendance were subcommittee members Toby Thaler, Tom Im, Christie Coxley, Jeannie Hale, John Coney, Frederica Merrell, Dennis Saxman, and Kay Knapton. No City staff were in attendance.

An attempt was made to schedule a second meeting of the subcommittee prior to October 20 NPAC, but it did not occur. On October 9, a small meeting was held by Co-chair Irene Wall and subcommittee lead Toby Thaler, with City employees David Goldberg and Lyle Bicknell.

SUMMARY OF SUBCOMMITTEE DISCUSSION

The group discussed relationship between plan update process and validation. Experience and document from 1990s were used as benchmarks. A few points were unanimously agreed to, and are set forth below.

DISCUSSION ITEMS FOR NPAC

Following are the points of general agreement by the subcommittee for consideration by the whole NPAC:

1. Validation of the plans begins with adequate engagement in development of the plan from the beginning. Crucial elements of successful plan development include—

- the planning process is primarily a grassroots effort, conducted by the affected neighborhood “bottom up;”
- all interested stakeholders are engaged, not just through outreach, but by representation or membership on an active oversight body, with standing committees based in the planning area; and
- the oversight committee (‘stewardship group’) controls the development of the plan, including access to funding to retain consultants with necessary expertise accountable directly to the stakeholders.

2. Validation of neighborhood plans is an iterative process, requiring regular review and adjustment.

3. NPAC, with help from City staff, needs to develop criteria for successful specific validation procedures. The document “Phase II Guidelines for Validation” (December 1996) is a good starting point.

ACTIONS/DECISIONS/DIRECTION NEEDED FROM NPAC

At the October 9 meeting, City staff indicated discomfort with the tone of the first bullet under no. 1, because it implies that there is a clear dichotomy between “bottom up” and “top down.” They said it is important to recognize that City departments will have a perspective, and that the process needs to move in both directions. They suggest that a better approach would be to focus on desired outcomes.

City staff also indicated that the stewardship group model (third bullet) for plan implementation has not been very successful.

NPAC needs to consider the subcommittee’s suggested position together with City staff comments.

DETAIL